

Employers Increase Productivity and Retention with ODEP's Workplace Flexibility Strategies and Resources

ODEP's proven workplace flexibility strategies, using Customized Employment (CE), and free resources, such as the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), can address employers' operations, retention, and productivity challenges. CE is a process through which the relationship between employer and employee is negotiated and personalized in a way that meets the needs of *both*. These strategies and resources overcome obstacles by negotiating individual tasks and/or reassigning basic duties, with the ultimate goal of improved overall workplace productivity.

Workplace flexibility policies and practices are strategic and competitive tools that address the impending "baby boom" tsunami of retirees; the desires of many mature workers to continue working on a part-time basis, in a career-transition job, or to accommodate their current or potential disabling conditions; and the dearth of younger workers to fill the workforce gap. These strategies are also paramount in inclusion of a diverse workforce for returning service members, veterans, people with limited English proficiency, as well as individuals with disabilities.

About 50 percent of employers rank flexibility as their most effective retention tool
(Watson 1998 Survey).

Employers Report that Using ODEP's CE Strategies and JAN Assistance:

- Helped meet a specific production or sales goal, increased customer satisfaction, improved operations, freed other employees to handle customers, and reduced backlogged work.
- Increased inclusion of workers with and without disabilities with complex lifestyle needs.
- Used flexible scheduling as a type of reasonable accommodation.
- Spent less than \$500 on reasonable accommodations (about 50 percent) with about half (45.6 percent) reporting no cost. Most involved changing the work schedule, modifying a workplace policy, or moving the employee to another job.
- Received \$3.60 in productivity return on investment for every dollar spent creating a more flexible and accommodating work environment.

CE works because the focus is on one person at a time and one business at a time.

Employer examples of increased productivity by changing operations through CE are abundant:

- Sales increased for a large department store that changed its operations from sales clerks unloading and repackaging new merchandise to a customized job for a qualified individual with a disability, freeing these clerks to spend more time *selling* to customers.
- Productivity and customer service improved for a chain music store with many staffing issues and concerns. An employee with a disability with a love for music was hired as a processing clerk and accomplishes all the non-sales tasks (discarding old magazines, processing new CDs, placing pricing stickers, etc.), previously assigned to sales staff.

"Flexibility then moves beyond being an under-the-radar accommodation for a few highly regarded employees and it becomes a team-directed work redesign effort." (Workplace Redesign, *Business Woman Magazine*, Fall 2007.)